

*Washington, DC* - U.S. Representatives John Hall (NY-19) and Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) today called on the Dutchess County Board of Elections to complete the processing of thousands of new voter registration forms that have been filed with the Board but reportedly are still pending review by the Commissioner of Elections, who is a Republican. The federal legislators expressed concern that further delays in processing the registration forms could disenfranchise voters in the upcoming election.

In a letter to Commissioners of Elections Fran Knapp and David Gamache, Hall and Hinchey wrote: September 23, 2008

The Honorable Fran Knapp

The Honorable David Gamache

Commissioners of Elections

Dutchess County Board of Elections

47 Cannon Street

Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 Dear Commissioners Knapp and Gamache, We are writing to urge you to expedite processing of all voter registration forms that are submitted to the Board of Elections before the legal deadline. We want to make certain that voters, especially new voters, not encounter difficulties at the polls on Election Day. Yet we understand that several thousand registration forms that have been approved by the Democratic Commissioner of Elections have not yet been reviewed by the Republican Commissioner.

Because 2008 is a Presidential election year, turnout will be heavy. It is critical that we ensure that those who are trusted with facilitating the voting process, especially the Board of Elections, do not become an impediment to that process. In response to the difficult circumstances Americans are being confronted with, thousands of individuals are registering to vote and looking forward to casting their first ballot. It is our duty to protect their right to do so and ensure the process is a timely and efficient one.

New voters need to know their voices will be heard. Delays in registering people on the voter rolls could jeopardize the ability to obtain an absentee ballot if one is needed, or cause delays at the polls when voters are forced to complete paper ballots. Voting is a right that should not be denied by unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles.

We ask you, as the Commissioners of Elections, to vigorously exercise your legal responsibility to encourage and facilitate voter participation. We urge you to make every effort to ensure that all legal voters are recorded in the rolls in advance and are able to vote easily and expeditiously in the November 4th election.

Sincerely,

John J. Hall     Maurice D. Hinchey

Member of Congress   Member of Congress   -30-